

THE KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT USING TRAINED READING HELPERS EFFECTIVELY

	1994	1995
Greg Brooks	C	D
Vivienne Cato		
Cres Fernandes	A	A
Ann Tregenza		

nfer

National Foundation for Educational Research
for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough
National Literacy Trust
Barclays Bank

JKDK
BRO

REFERENCE

THE KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT: Using trained reading helpers effectively

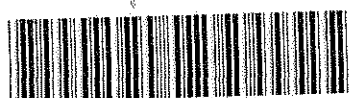
Greg Brooks
Vivienne Cato
Cres Fernandes
Ann Tregenza

THE LIBRARY NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN ENGLAND & WALES THE MERE, UPTON PARK SLOUGH, BERKS. SL1 2DQ
DATE: 26-3-96
CLASS: JKDK
ACCN. NO: 27111
AUTHOR: BROOKS, G.

REFERENCE

nfer

for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough



B 4 254338 X

Published in March 1996
by the National Foundation for Educational Research,
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ
for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough

YRABEII ENT MOTI MOTI CON FOR JANOTAN KOMASSE JANOTTADU BELLON A OMA LEWIS MI MOM WOTTU LAMM ENT OUE LIE JESSE MEXLIE
:STAO
:BZAD
:OM .KDOA
:SONTUA

© National Foundation for Educational Research 1996
Registered Charity No. 313392
ISBN 0 7005 1412 0

CONTENTS

List of Tables	iii
List of Figures	iii
Authors	iv
Acknowledgments	iv
Chapter 1: Origin, aims and outline of the Knowsley Reading Project	1
1.1 Identifying the problem	1
1.2 Social and cultural factors	1
1.3 Addressing the problem	2
1.4 Aims of the project	2
1.5 Outline of the Knowsley Reading Project	2
1.6 Local evaluation, 1992/93	4
1.7 Origin, background and aims of the NFER evaluation	4
Chapter 2: How effective was the Knowsley Reading Project?	6
A: The test results	6
Key result	6
2.1 Size of sample	6
2.2 Raw scores	7
2.3 Standardised scores	8
2.4 Possible alternative explanations of the main result	10
2.5 Pupil characteristics	12
B: The pupil questionnaire responses	14
Key result	14
2.6 Size of sample	14
2.7 Enjoyment of reading	14
2.8 Voluntary reading	14
2.9 Ease or difficulty of reading	15
2.10 Reading preferences	15

2.11	Use of libraries	15
2.12	Time spent reading	16
2.13	Number of books owned	16
2.14	Pupil characteristics	16
2.15	Summary	16
C:	The teachers' and volunteers' views on the impact of the Project on pupils	17
	Key result	17
2.16	The samples	17
2.17	The teachers' and volunteers' views	17
2.18	Conclusions on the effectiveness of the Project	18
Chapter 3:	What factors lay behind the effectiveness of the Knowsley Reading Project?	19
3.1	Volunteer help and time on task	19
3.2	Directed reading activities	21
3.3	Resources	21
3.4	Training and support	22
3.5	Commitment	23
3.6	Collaboration and job satisfaction	24
3.7	Summary of factors associated with the effectiveness of the Project	26
Chapter 4:	General conclusions	27
References		28
Appendices		30
	Appendix A: How the evaluation was carried out	30
	A.1 The information collected	30
	A.2 Planned comparisons	32
	Appendix B: The surveys of pupils' attitudes	34
	B.1 The questionnaire	34
	B.2 Enjoyment of reading	35
	B.3 Ease or difficulty of reading	37
	B.4 Independence in reading	38

B.5	Reading preferences	39
B.6	Favourite books and authors	42
B.7	Reading habits	44
B.8	Summary of main findings on pupils' attitudes	46
Appendices C–E: Copies of 1995 teacher, volunteer and pupil questionnaires		48
Appendix C: The 1995 teacher questionnaire		49
Appendix D: The 1995 volunteer questionnaire		57
Appendix E: The 1995 pupil questionnaire		63

List of Tables

Table 1	Numbers of pupils taking combinations of tests	7
Table 2	Raw scores – pupils taking same test again only	8
Table 3	Standardised scores – pupils within age-range norms only	8
Table 4	Standardised average scores for largest pupil group, by year and whether or not receiving free school meals	12
Table 5	Enjoyment of private reading	36
Table 6	Difficulty with reading	37
Table 7	Independence in reading	38
Table 8	Preference for television over books	39

List of Figures

Figure 1	Frequency of reading with teachers and other adults	20
Figure 2	'Top Ten' genres of reading material	41

Authors

Dr Greg Brooks, Senior Research Officer at NFER and Evaluation Leader, was the main author of this report.

Vivienne Cato, Consultant, London, did most of the interpretation of data for, and wrote most of, Appendix B, on the pupils' attitudes.

Cres Fernandes, Senior Research Officer at NFER and Evaluation Statistician, did all the data analysis.

Ann Tregenza, English Adviser, Knowsley LEA, wrote the description of the Project in chapter 1.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to express their thanks to

- Peggy Nastat, D.Phil. student at Oxford University Department of Educational Studies, who edited chapter 1
- Neil McClelland of the National Literacy Trust, for finding support for the publication of this report
- Barclays Bank, for providing financial support for the publication of this report
- Ms Effie de Souza, Ms Mary Hargreaves, Mr Tim Wright and Dr Enver Carim for their work in designing, producing and publishing the report

and especially to

- all those involved in the Project and the evaluation in Knowsley – volunteers, teachers, facilitators, co-ordinators, members of steering and management groups, and the pupils – for their help and collaboration.

CHAPTER 1: ORIGIN, AIMS AND OUTLINE OF THE KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT

1.1 Identifying the problem

From 1983 to 1989, Knowsley Local Education Authority administered the Edinburgh Reading Test to all 7-, 11- and 13-year-olds in its schools, and in 1990 carried out an analysis of the results. This showed that:

- attainment at 7 was not dramatically below the national average
- attainment at 11 and 13 showed a progressively steep decline with little variation or improvement
- only a small percentage of students achieved a standard of reading that was above the national average.

Between 1989 and 1992, 20 to 25 per cent of pupils were identified by the Schools Psychological Service as requiring further attention by the Special Needs Service. A major finding was that a large number of pupils in the middle range of general ability were below the national average in terms of reading attainment.

1.2 Social and cultural factors

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough consists of a group of urban villages. Although the quality and standard of housing and care for the environment have improved greatly in recent years, social and cultural factors in the Borough may have influenced pupils' scholastic abilities. More than 50 per cent of pupils in the Borough receive free school meals, compared to a national average of 19 per cent for primary schools and 13 per cent for secondary schools. Unemployment is twice the national average, and 60 per cent of Borough families are classified as low-income families. In comparison with a national average of 17.2 per cent, in Knowsley Borough 41.1 per cent of children live in households with no income earner, and the number of children in single-parent homes is twice the national average.

1.3 Addressing the problem

In 1991-1992, Knowsley LEA conducted a survey of 40 schools which enabled teachers to identify a range of needs and concerns. They included the following:

- More time for reading with pupils in the middle range of ability (the largest percentage of pupils in every class)
- A wider range of books to support reading in school and at home
- In-service training to help teachers extend their repertoire of teaching and learning methods to match pupils' needs more effectively.

In the Autumn term of 1992, the **Knowsley Reading Project** was initiated in response to teachers' concerns and to the problem of low reading levels.

1.4 Aims of the project

The main aim of the Knowsley Reading Project was **to raise the overall standard of reading** in the Borough – particularly for **average ability pupils**.

The Project also aimed to:

- Support the development of reading through primary to secondary school
- Agree on a common approach to teaching reading in the Borough
- Provide training for teachers, volunteers and parents
- Provide a consistent and continuous method of assessment
- Support the provision of an appropriate range of books for classroom libraries and home reading
- Enable pupils to choose books effectively. The pilot study (see below) showed that many pupils were unable to do this. The availability and range of books within classrooms was a significant factor because many Knowsley pupils depend on their class libraries for access to books.

1.5 Outline of the Knowsley Reading Project

The **key feature** of the Project was

- **the recruitment and training of large numbers of adult volunteers who helped primary pupils with their reading on a regular basis.**

The other main components of the Project which supported that key feature were:

- **Training for parents and other volunteers.** This was believed to be one of the most important components, because in the pilot project it seemed to make the most significant difference to raising reading standards. The advisory service provided an accredited training course for volunteers so that they would feel a sense of achievement and would continue to work towards higher qualifications.
- **A two-day residency** for teachers at each school which included demonstrations of a range of teaching techniques in different group settings, and opportunities for teachers to observe and evaluate the demonstrations using OFSTED criteria.
- **An agreed common approach to teaching reading.** The approach was accepted by all those involved in the Project and defined the range of reading skills that pupils needed. They included word recognition, phonic skills, prediction, memory skills, recall of previous reading, comprehension and reading with understanding, and the ability to choose books for different purposes.
- **An audit of school policy and resources** in order to identify each school's strengths and needs.
- **A consistent and continuous system of assessment** recommended for key stages 1, 2 and 3 which would enable teachers, parents, volunteers and children to record and monitor progress and development.
- **A support network.** Each school had a facilitator, each cluster of schools had a co-ordinator and a steering group, and a Borough management group co-ordinated the support network and planned and monitored development. The steering groups brought together the facilitators, and the management group included the co-ordinators, local Councillors, school governors and representatives from all the Support Services.

The components of the Project were adapted to the needs of the schools and evolved in collaboration with the schools and the Support Services. A more detailed description of the Project's approach is given in training materials published by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough in 1996.

1.6 Local evaluation, 1992/93

In 1992/93, a pilot phase of the Project included a small cluster of six primary schools and the secondary school to which most of their pupils transferred. In 1993/94, the Project expanded to a further seven primary schools, and in 1994/95 to another 13, and by 1995 over 40 schools had joined.

In 1992/93 a local evaluation was also carried out. The evidence gathered included reading tests (Macmillan), pupils' Records of Achievement for reading, and responses to questionnaires from headteachers, teachers and parents or volunteers who were trained to help pupils with reading in school. This evidence seemed to confirm that, although the standard of reading for most pupils of average general ability was lower than the national average, standards could be raised by using the activities of the Knowsley Reading Project.

The schools involved in the local evaluation varied considerably. The quality of classroom libraries differed significantly, and the evaluation showed that the class library was the most important factor in determining pupils' choice of books. The quality of teaching and learning also varied. Teachers valued the in-service support provided within the Project's two-day residency and also listed the provision of extra books in the classroom as a great help in raising reading standards.

The local evaluation also showed that very few children had books at home or had access to a variety of books in the local library. It also provided evidence that children's knowledge of the range of genres of books and authors was very limited. Both parental support and support for reading across the curriculum proved to be difficult to achieve, sustain and manage. This lack of support had serious implications for below-average readers. The results of the local evaluation confirmed that a problem existed, and indicated that **a consistent and continuous approach was needed in order to support the development of reading through the key stages, using all of the components of the Reading Project.**

1.7 Origin, background and aims of the NFER evaluation

Though the local evaluation had convinced those involved of the value of the Project, the LEA required independent evidence to justify investment of further time and finance, and to reassure schools of the effectiveness of the various project components. In 1994, therefore, Knowsley LEA commissioned NFER

to carry out an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the Knowsley Reading Project in order to obtain systematic, objective data on the initiative.

The NFER evaluation focused on the 13 primary schools which entered the Project in the 1994/95 school year, and within them on those of their pupils who were in Year 5 in the 1993/94 school year, and in Year 6 in 1994/95. None of the schools had been involved in the Project previously. The evaluation was therefore planned on a 'before and after' design.

The aim of the evaluation was to investigate

- ◆ the extent to which the Project had enabled the participating pupils to make greater progress in reading than would be expected simply from the pupils' normal educational and other experience
- ◆ the extent to which the Project had changed the participating pupils' reading habits and attitudes to reading
- ◆ some background factors which might have contributed to any changes.

Ten of the schools were in Kirkby and three in Huyton. Unemployment in Kirkby at the time was higher than the Knowsley average. The average proportion of children receiving free school meals in Knowsley primary schools in 1994/95 was 38 per cent; in Huyton it was 46 per cent, and in Kirkby 65 per cent. In some Kirkby schools it reached 80 per cent. Knowsley Borough provides a necessitous clothing allowance for low-income families; in 1994/95 this allowance was received by 57 per cent of pupils in Huyton, and by 74 per cent of those in Kirkby.

The remainder of this report provides an account of the NFER evaluation:

- the main findings are given in chapter 2
- chapter 3 presents an analysis of the reasons for the Project's success
- conclusions are stated in chapter 4
- the methodology is described in Appendix A
- the full results of the survey of pupils' attitudes are given in Appendix B
- the questionnaires used are reproduced in Appendices C to E.

Chapter 2: HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT?

This chapter presents the main findings on the effectiveness of the Project, drawing on the test results and the pupil questionnaire data. For a full account of the methodology, including details of the tests used, see Appendix A.

A. THE TEST RESULTS

Key result: The main group of 300 pupils achieved one and two-thirds years' reading progress in one year.

2.1 Size of sample

The total number of pupils for whom test results were calculated in 1994 was 501. In 1995, tests were returned for 454 pupils who had taken one in 1994; the drop-out was mainly due to pupils having left the schools, though absence from the 1995 test and missing information also contributed. On the other hand, a number of pupils had joined the schools, and tests were returned in 1995 for six pupils who had not taken one in 1994. Though all tests were marked on both occasions (in order to give feedback to the schools), for the purposes of this evaluation calculations could be based only on those pupils who took the tests in both years. For the remainder of this report, therefore, the results of pupils who took a test in only one year are excluded.

Within the set of 454 pupils who took a test in both years, the numbers of pupils who took the five possible combinations of levels were as shown in Table 1. (The reasons for the variations are given in Appendix A.)

Table 1: Numbers of pupils taking combinations of tests

Test levels (Reading Ability Series)		Number of pupils
1994	1995	
A	A	28
B	C	72
C	D	302
D	D	14
D	E	38

Before the test results are presented, it must be pointed out that (by agreement with their teachers) some of these pupils had taken a test that was not designed for their age. The norms for these tests cover the following age ranges:

- Level A** 7:00 – 8:11
- B** 8:00 – 9:11
- C** 9:00 – 10:11
- D** 10:00 – 11:11
- E** 11:00 – 12.11

The 28 pupils who took level A in both years were therefore taking a test intended for pupils on average two years younger than they were in 1994, and three years younger than they were in 1995. Standardised scores could not be calculated for any of this group on either occasion. Similarly, pupils falling outside the age range of the standardisation norms for Tests B and D in 1994, and of Tests C and E in 1995, could not be included in the calculation of standardised scores. Only for Test C in 1994 and for Test D in 1995 could all pupils' raw scores be standardised. However, this was by far the largest group, and because of this standardised scores could be calculated in all for 356 pupils who took a test in both years (78 per cent of those taking a test in both years).

2.2 Raw scores

For most of the pupils involved, comparisons between the raw scores achieved in the two years would be meaningless, because they took different test levels, and these results are therefore not given. However, for the two small groups who did take the same level in both years, comparisons of the average raw scores are valid, since any progress made should be apparent in the raw scores. It is important to note that a rise of 5 marks would be expected simply because

the pupils were a year older when they took the test the second time. The results for these two groups are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Raw scores – pupils taking same test again only

Test level	Number of pupils	Number of items	Average raw scores	
			1994	1995
A	28	25	10.0	12.6
D	14	47	23.3	31.6

Though these groups were small, the results were interesting. The group who took level A had made only about half of the ‘expected’ progress, and their 1995 average score was not significantly higher, statistically, than their 1994 score. By contrast, the group who took level D had made about 50 per cent **more** progress than would be expected, and the increase over their 1994 average score **was** statistically significant. These findings would be consistent with a general picture in which poorer readers tend to make least progress, and the distribution of scores tends to ‘fan out’ more and more.

2.3 Standardised scores

The best measure of the progress made by most of the pupils involved is their average standardised scores, and these are given in Table 3. For each group, the score on the level taken in 1994 is presented alongside that on the level taken in 1995. As for all standardised tests, the national average score is 100.

Table 3: Standardised scores – pupils within age-range norms only

Number of pupils	1994 results		1995 results	
	Test level	Average score	Test level	Average score
16	B	84.4	C	86.2
302	C	92.7	D	97.9
38	D	105.8	E	102.2

Thus in both years the average scores rose with the test levels. This is as one would expect, since teachers allocated test levels in 1994 on the basis of their prior knowledge of each pupil’s reading attainment. Only on test D in 1994 and test E in 1995 – the level of the highest-attaining children – were pupils performing above the national average for their age.

In 1994 at levels B and C and across the year group as a whole, average attainment fell below the national average. The use of these objective test scores thus corroborated the local perceptions of average reading standards in Knowsley which had led to the setting up of the Project in the first place.

The 1995 results showed a rise in the average scores of the first two groups, and across the year group as a whole. The increase for the group who took level B in 1994 and level C in 1995 was not statistically significant, but this was a very small group.

The fall in the average scores for the group who took level D in 1994 and level E in 1995 was statistically significant (even though this group was also relatively small), and is a puzzle, particularly since it appeared to contradict the result for the group who took level D in both years. Level E was originally devised for pupils in Year 7, and the deviser of the tests has suggested that the rise in difficulty between levels D and E is steeper than between other levels (Kispal, personal communication). This may be because level E was intended for pupils who had already made the transition to the greater demands of secondary schooling, and level E may therefore have posed heavy demands even on able pupils in Year 6. A further possibility is the influence of the national curriculum. Key stage 2 science (in the pre-1995 version which was in force at the time) gave a good deal of attention to wildlife habitats (the subject of the expository section of level D), but much less to food preservation (the subject of the expository section of level E).

The result of greatest importance for the evaluation was that for the 302 pupils who took level C in 1994 and level D in 1995. The rise of 5.2 standardised score points was highly significant, statistically, and brought these pupils from being well below the national average to being very close to it.

In less technical terms, in 1994 (when their average chronological age at the date of testing was about 10 years 3 months) the average reading age of this group of pupils would have been about 8 years 11 months. In 1995 (when their average chronological age was about 11 years 3 months), their average reading age had gone up to about 10 years 7 months. Therefore the rise in their average standardised score represented about a year and eight months' improvement in reading, achieved in one year.

This was an impressive gain, and the obvious explanation for it would be the Project – but before that explanation can be accepted, two others must be ruled out.

2.4 Possible alternative explanations of the main result

Practice?

When pupils take the same test twice, they sometimes benefit from a practice effect. That is, their scores on the second occasion may go up just because they remember some of the items. Even if the tests are different, if they are similar in approach a practice effect may occur because the pupils learn how to tackle that type of test. In this study, some pupils did take the same test twice, and the rest took two tests from within the same series; and all the tests in the series are very similar in format and approach.

However, when practice effects are found, they usually occur when pupils are tested twice within a fairly short time – a few weeks at most. In this study, the two occasions of testing were a year apart. It is therefore very unlikely that any of the improvement was due to practice.

A general rise in reading attainment?

Could all or part of the improvement have been due, not to the Project itself, but to a more general movement of standards of attainment? The most recent **national** survey of reading attainment in Year 6 in England and Wales was the last Assessment of Performance Unit survey, conducted in 1988 (Gorman *et al.*, 1991), and there is therefore no direct evidence on the national trend of reading standards at that age at the time of this study.

More recently, NFER carried out a survey of reading attainment of pupils in England and Wales in Year 3 in 1995. A similar study in 1991 (Gorman and Fernandes, 1992) had found a small but statistically significant fall in the average reading score of pupils in Year 3 between 1987 and 1991. The main result of the 1995 study (Brooks *et al.*, forthcoming; see Tabberer and Brooks, 1995; Blackburne, 1995) was that the average reading score of Year 3 pupils had risen between 1991 and 1995, and by 1995 had returned to the 1987 level. This is not **direct** evidence of what might have been happening in Year 6, and two, contradictory, deductions might be made from it, according to which assumptions are made.

On the one hand, it might be assumed that all levels of the school system move roughly in parallel, in terms of the trend of performance standards. If this were so, then it might be inferred that between 1991 and 1995 there had been a rise

in the average national reading score in Year 6 as well as in Year 3. But the 'parallel movement' assumption is unsound; for example, between 1983 and 1988 there was a small rise in the average reading standard in Year 6, but no overall change in the average reading standard in Year 11 (Gorman *et al.*, 1991, pp.61-2; cf. Brooks *et al.*, 1995a).

Alternatively, it might be assumed that cohorts of pupils tend to 'carry' their levels of performance through the school system with them, independently of what is happening with other cohorts. In November 1995 the Secondary Heads Association (1995) published the results of a survey which, it was claimed, showed a decline in entry test scores in secondary schools in the period 1991-94. (It should, however, be noted that many of the tests used in the schools contributing to the SHA study were not measures of reading.) The pupils who were in Year 3 in the school years 1987/88, 1988/89, 1989/90 and 1990/91 were in Year 6 in 1990/91, 1991/92, 1992/93 and 1993/94 respectively. The two sets of years are exactly those for which Gorman and Fernandes (1992) and SHA (1995) reported a decline for Years 3 and 6 respectively, so that this might be interpreted as the downward trend in reading in Year 3 between 1987 and 1991 showing up again, and not just in reading, for (most of) the same cohorts of pupils in Year 6 between 1991 and 1994.

However, the SHA study was not particularly reliable. From the report of the study it was impossible to tell how many of the schools which responded were reporting a decline specifically in reading; and the sample of schools which responded was by definition self-selected, and almost certainly not statistically representative. It was therefore impossible to tell whether the SHA study had validly picked up local indications of a national trend, or just the amount of downward variation which might be expected across the country and which *might* be balanced by unreported upward variation elsewhere.

Hence there is no evidence that the positive main result of the Knowsley Reading Project was due to a wider national trend. In the absence of an alternative explanation, therefore, **the positive main outcome for the pupils involved can be attributed to the Knowsley Reading Project itself, and indicates that the Project was highly effective for the broad mass of pupils involved.**

2.5 Pupil characteristics

First language

No pupil in the survey had any language other than English as his or her first language; therefore no analyses could be carried out with bilingualism as a factor.

Free school meals

Data on pupils' take-up of (not merely eligibility for) free school meals was used as a measure of social deprivation, and related to their performance on the tests.

A statistical test of the difference in scores between those receiving and those not receiving free meals was possible for only one of the five groups of pupils. The two groups who took the same test in both years were too small to permit reliable comparisons of free meal takers and non-takers within them. This was also true of two of the groups for whom standardised scores could be calculated in both years (the group taking B in 1994 and C in 1995, and that taking D in 1994 and E in 1995). A statistical test could therefore be carried out only within the group who took C in 1994 and D in 1995 – the largest group. The relevant results are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Standardised average scores for largest pupil group, by year and whether or not receiving free school meals

	Receiving free school meals?			
	Yes		No	
	No. of pupils	Average score	No. of pupils	Average score
1994	163	91.6	139	94.0
1995	163	96.8	139	99.3

The difference in average scores between pupils receiving and not receiving free meals was 2.4 points in 1994, and 2.5 points in 1995; neither difference was statistically significant. Moreover, the two subgroups made almost identical and statistically indistinguishable amounts of progress between the two years (5.2 and 5.3 points). There was therefore little initial or final difference between

these subgroups, and this proxy for socio-economic status was related neither to difference in achievement nor to amount of progress made. The selection of pupils to take level C in 1994 had therefore produced a very evenly balanced group, in this respect. It can be inferred that the Project's approach was equally suitable for the pupils in both subgroups.

Key stage 2 English level, 1995

In 1995, key stage 2 *English* results were provided by the schools for 419 pupils who had completed a test in both years. No pupil in this sample achieved below level 1, or at level 6; the range of key stage 2 results was therefore levels 1 to 5 – but there was only one pupil whose result was level 1. Standardised *reading* scores could be calculated for 348 of these pupils, but the groups taking levels C and E in 1995 and level D in both years were too small to base further analyses on. Analyses were therefore again conducted only for the group who had taken level C in 1994 and level D in 1995. Raw and standardised scores (for both years) and key stage 2 results (for 1995) were available for 284 of these pupils. Correlations were calculated between the key stage 2 results, on the one hand, and, on the other, each of the four test results (the raw and standardised scores, 1994 and 1995).

The four correlations were all just below 0.60. While highly consistent with each other, these coefficients showed only modest correlations between the tests used in this study and the key stage 2 levels. However, this finding may mean rather little, for two main reasons:

- the key stage 2 levels were for English as a whole, and incorporated a mark for writing which contributed half of the total; it is therefore not surprising that the correlations with a reading test were modest. Correlations between these test results and the key stage 2 marks for reading might have been higher, but those marks were not available to the evaluation team
- the very short range of key stage 2 levels (4 points) made it difficult for high correlations to emerge.

The key stage 2 results proved more useful, however, in the analysis of the pupil questionnaire results.

B. THE PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Key result: The attitudes to reading of the great majority of pupils improved.

2.6 Size of sample

This section is based on the responses of the 433 pupils who completed questionnaires in both years. Within parts A and B of the pupil questionnaire (which were identical in both years) there were 43 questions yielding quantitative data on which differences on the two occasions could be measured. On 29 of these, the findings in the two years were very similar. On 11 questions, the 1995 results showed an improvement over 1994, while there was a decline on three. Only the most important findings are given here; a detailed analysis is presented in Appendix B.

2.7 Enjoyment of reading

The proportion of pupils surveyed who claimed to enjoy reading was about three-quarters in both years. However, the proportions who gave the following *negative responses fell* between 1994 and 1995:

- ◆ those who described themselves as not interested in books fell from about a quarter to 18 per cent
- ◆ those who claimed they could not recall reading anything enjoyable fell from 30 per cent to 19 per cent.

2.8 Voluntary reading

The proportion who said that they read only what they had to fell from just over a quarter of the sample to 17 per cent. Similarly, those who read only books provided by the teacher declined from 20 per cent to 12 per cent. Those who said they enjoyed reading at home rose from just under three-quarters to 79 per cent.

2.9 Ease or difficulty of reading

In 1994, 28 per cent disagreed with the statement that they did better in subjects where they did not have to read a lot; in 1995, this figure had risen to 36 per cent.

2.10 Reading preferences

The proportion who preferred reading books to watching television fell from just over a quarter to 19 per cent, while the proportion preferring television over reading remained about the same (47 per cent). Similarly, the proportion preferring reading to playing out fell from 25 to 18 per cent, though the proportion expressing the opposite view did not change (53 per cent).

In 1994, books were preferred to comics and magazines as reading material by 45 per cent of the sample, while 34 per cent expressed the opposite preference. By 1995, this difference had disappeared: the two opinions had converged at 38 per cent.

Within the ten most popular genres of reading materials, adventure stories, fairy tales and animal stories all dropped between 1994 and 1995, while magazines rose.

The proportion of pupils saying they had a favourite book or author rose from 81 per cent in 1994 to 87 per cent in 1995. When pupils were asked in 1994 whether they had enjoyed reading any fiction or non-fiction in the last year, quite divergent responses emerged. Whilst 69 per cent of children could think of some non-fiction work they had recently enjoyed, only 36 per cent felt they had enjoyed any work of fiction that year. In 1995 the picture had changed strikingly: though the proportion who could think of some non-fiction work they had recently enjoyed had fallen to 57 per cent, those who felt they had enjoyed a work of fiction had more than doubled, to 78 per cent.

2.11 Use of libraries

The proportion of pupils who never borrowed books from the public library fell from 43 per cent to 35 per cent.

2.12 Time spent reading

Of children who read fiction for their own pleasure in 1994, 44 per cent did so for only one or two hours each week; in 1995 this proportion was 32 per cent. Similarly for non-fiction: in 1994, 52 per cent spent only one or two hours a week reading this genre of text for their own pleasure, and in 1995 this figure had fallen to 45 per cent. For both genres, the proportions spending more time had risen. On average, therefore, pupils seemed to be spending **more time reading for their own pleasure.**

2.13 Number of books owned

In 1994, only 10 per cent of pupils owned no books at all, and by 1995 this had fallen still further, to seven per cent. Similarly, the proportion owning between one and ten books fell from 23 per cent to 19 per cent; and the proportions owning larger numbers rose.

2.14 Pupil characteristics

Very few significant associations between attitudes and receiving or not receiving free school meals emerged consistently over the two years. However, there was a noticeable tendency for girls to have more positive attitudes to reading, and to read more. The strongest associations found were between key stage 2 English results and attitudes in 1995. Predictably, pupils who achieved level 4 or 5 had much more positive attitudes, read more, found reading easy and enjoyable, owned more books, and showed up better on many of the questionnaire items; those who achieved level 3 tended to be middling in all these respects; and those who achieved level 2 were largely reluctant readers, found reading difficult, owned fewer books, and had much less positive attitudes.

2.15 Summary

Though the general picture had remained largely the same, the **changes in pupils' reading attitudes and habits that had occurred were mainly positive.** Fewer expressed negative attitudes, voluntary reading had increased, fewer found subjects which required a lot of reading difficult, more were borrowing from public libraries, and both the amount of time spent reading for pleasure and the number of books owned had increased. This was despite a fall in the popularity of reading relative to watching television and playing out, and in the popularity of reading books relative to reading comics and other leisure material. The most striking single finding was that **the proportion who had recently enjoyed a work of fiction had more than doubled.**

The overall picture was of a small but definite rise in the confidence that most of these pupils felt in themselves as readers, accompanied by increased confidence by some in their preferences for other activities. But again, this improvement was seen mainly in average and above-average pupils; those achieving level 2 at key stage 2 were markedly less positive.

C. THE TEACHERS' AND VOLUNTEERS' VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON PUPILS

Key result: The teachers and volunteers were convinced of the value of the Project

2.16 The samples

In June 1995 teachers and volunteers involved with the Project were asked to complete questionnaires. These were returned by 23 teachers (of whom 20 were women) and 64 volunteers (of whom 62 were women). A few of the teachers had less than 10 years' experience, but most had between 16 and 30 years. Of the volunteers, all but eight had experience of working with children, some for many years. All of the volunteers had learnt about the Project through direct contact from the school.

2.17 The teachers' and volunteers' views

Both the teachers and the volunteers were asked how they would rate the impact of the Project on the pupils involved. Nineteen of the teachers and 60 of the volunteers thought that the Project had been fairly or very successful, while only four and two respectively considered it borderline in this respect. One of the four teachers with less positive views commented:

The ones who already enjoy reading responded well, others rather apathetic – targets needed chasing up.

Those teachers who viewed the impact more positively emphasised the improvements in pupils' performance and attitudes, for example:

Children look forward to reading with parents and have shown some progress in general.

The pupils feel more valued as quality time has been spent with them. Social interaction has been improved.

Of the two volunteers who doubted the impact on the children, one said it was too early to tell, while the other, somewhat contradictorily, wrote: *'They now talk to me about what they like in books.'* Almost all the volunteers stressed the great improvement in children's attitudes (keenness, enjoyment); some also remarked on improvement in attainment, for example:

I got a tremendous 'buzz' from the confidence in reading that the children display after working with them for a few short weeks yet frustrated that some children, despite all my efforts, are still struggling.

2.18 Conclusions on the effectiveness of the Project

The test results showed that most of the pupils involved had achieved **substantial improvement in their reading**, though there was a low-achieving group who not only continued to trail but lagged ever further behind; and there was a puzzling result for one of the two highest-achieving groups. Also, there had been a **general rise in positive reading attitudes and habits**, though low achievers in key stage 2 English retained negative attitudes to reading. And the teachers and volunteers were united in identifying the **general improvement in pupils' attitudes**, with some also noting an improvement in attainment. The fact that the main improvement in reading was demonstrated on a standardised test shows that the progress achieved was **significantly greater than would have been expected if these pupils had experienced 'normal' provision** in school. The improvement can therefore be confidently attributed to the Project.

What the results so far presented do not show is what factors within the Project were associated with its effectiveness; this is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3:
**WHAT FACTORS LAY BEHIND
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
THE KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT?**

3.1 Volunteer help and time on task

One of the major intentions of the Knowsley Reading Project was to attempt to raise pupils' achievement by increasing the amount of individual support they had for their reading. The 64 volunteer questionnaires returned in June 1995 represented an average of five volunteers per *school*, and it is clear that this was by no means all of those who were helping in the 13 Project schools. Participating teachers, in their 1995 questionnaire, were asked how many volunteers had worked with Year 6 pupils in their class during the school year 1994/95. The 15 teachers responding who had been teaching Year 6 in that year reported that between them they had had the help of 50 volunteers (an average of 3.5 per *class*); 12 added that this was more than they had had in the previous year. Several comments indicated how the extra help benefited teachers:

Now I have a rota of parents I can give more attention to teaching.

It takes some of the weight off me listening to children read.

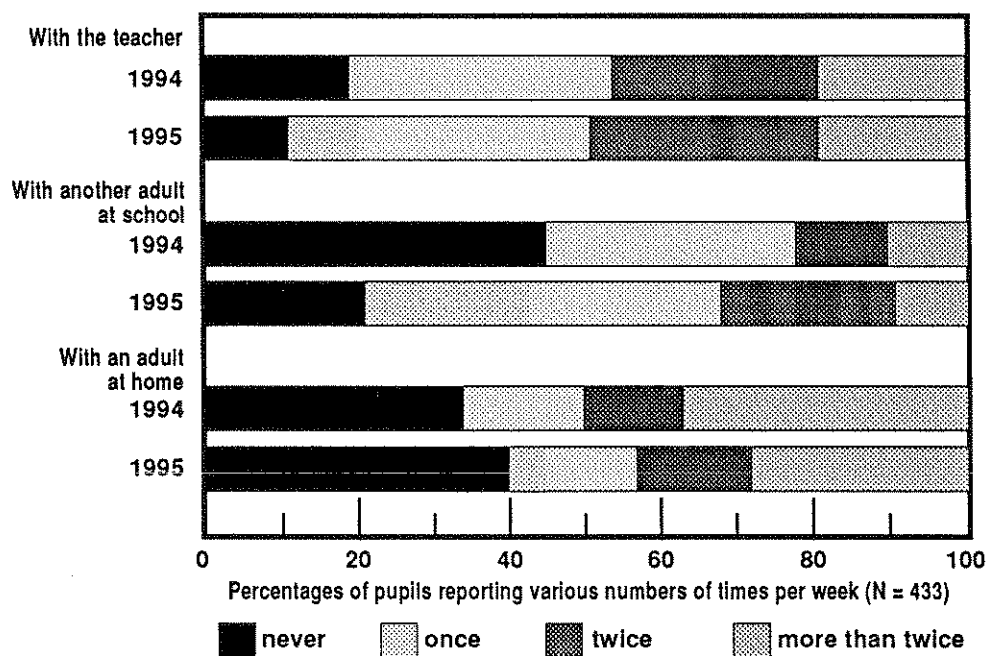
I feel I have made good working relationships with the volunteers. It has also helped to take some of the 'pressure' away from me to hear the children read at least twice a week. With volunteers some children can be heard every day.

The volunteers were asked when they had started work in the schools for the Project; of the 58 who answered this question, 22 said they had started in the Autumn term 1994, 36 in the Spring term 1995. The teachers were also asked when volunteers had started work in their schools; of the 22 who responded on this item, seven named the Autumn term 1994, 15 the Spring term 1995. Therefore, only a minority of the 13 schools had operated the Project for the full school year; in most, **the effect on pupils was achieved in rather less than two terms**, since the post-testing took place in mid-June 1995. It is worth noting that in their replies on the impact of the Project on the children many volunteers stressed that **the children were getting much more time for their reading**.

Similarly, in Part C of their 1995 questionnaire, pupils were asked about the amount of help they had had with reading in that school year. Half said they had had more, 28 per cent about the same, and 22 per cent less. To a question asking who had given them help with reading that year, 90 per cent of pupils named their teacher, and about three quarters mentioned each of parents and other adults, while siblings, other relatives, friends and (unspecified) others were each mentioned by between a third and a quarter.

In Part B of the pupil questionnaire there were three more specific questions which were asked in both years; the results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Frequency of reading with teachers and other adults



The average frequency of reading with an adult at home had fallen; this is consistent with the reported increases in preference for watching television and for playing out. But at school the average frequency of reading with a teacher had increased slightly, and of reading with another adult (the Project volunteers) very markedly. The Project had therefore **succeeded in its most important intervening objective, namely a substantial increase in the amount of individual reading attention pupils received.**

This in turn will have substantially increased the amount of time during which pupils' attention was focused on their reading. As with almost all achievements, **supported time spent on task was found to be an important factor associated with pupils' success with reading in this Project.**

3.2 Directed reading activities

What did pupils do during the year that impinged on their reading? Three questions were asked of pupils in the 1995 questionnaire about specific forms of reading activity which might have had a bearing on achievement. Fifty-two per cent said they had **read to younger pupils** in the school during the year; this would have increased their own time for practice. About half of these pupils had helped younger pupils with their reading, a quarter had read in class assemblies, and a further quarter had made books to read to pupils in infant classes. Pupils who achieved below level 3 at key stage 2 at the end of the year were least likely to have read to younger pupils.

Similarly, 52 per cent of pupils said their class teacher had **made suggestions to them during the year about what they should read**, and just over half of those pupils said that their teachers had made more suggestions than in the previous year. Of specific suggestions reported, just over half were names of authors (especially Dick King Smith, Anne Fine, Shakespeare), while most of the remainder were related to technical improvements, such as reading with expression.

When asked if their class had taken part in any **special reading activities during the year**, 77 per cent of pupils said they had. Some of the activities most frequently mentioned were 'a teacher came in with lots of books', 'bouncing for books', topic research, and special assemblies.

The teachers also said that they had made more use of particular categories of book during the year: author collections were mentioned by 10 teachers, fiction by 18, and non-fiction and poetry by 19 each.

3.3 Resources

The mention of 'lots of books' is a reminder that the Project would have been stillborn without extra resources. In June 1995, teachers and pupils were asked about the quantity of books in their class and school libraries compared to the beginning of the school year. Of the 22 teachers responding, 10 said that their school library had more, and 17 that their class library had more – one adding the rider that in her school it was impossible to increase both school and class library stock in the same year. Two teachers commented:

The book selections were excellent.

We need more resources to buy books like these.

Of the pupils responding, 56 per cent thought their school library had more books, 69 per cent thought their class library had more, and in both cases only 12 per cent thought there were fewer.

Teachers were also asked whether they had had any other extra resources (financial or material) to help them implement the Project; 11 out of the 23 responding said they had, and the majority of these again mentioned new books, implying the money to buy them.

The striking finding that the proportion of pupils who reported having enjoyed a fiction book had increased from 36 to 78 per cent appeared to confirm that within the wider choice of books many more pupils had found something to their liking.

3.4 Training and support

Training to start up the Project in any school was provided by the Knowsley Adviser and Advisory Teacher for English. They trained the Project facilitators and other teachers in the schools, and all of these people took part in training the volunteers.

The training for teachers varied in length between two days and several sessions, and the content included staff meetings, discussions, awareness raising, observing volunteer training, observing the use of a Record of Achievement for reading, and demonstration of teaching and learning techniques.

The training for volunteers consisted of several sessions, during which volunteers were supported in helping children to choose and talk about books. They were also shown ways of reading books with children, helping them to tackle unknown words, using different strategies, and encouraging them and giving them confidence; the volunteers then had the opportunity to try out these skills.

Both teachers and volunteers were asked about the training they received. Of the 23 teachers, 16 said they had received training. Of these, 11 rated the training as good or very good, three rated it as average or poor, and two did not give a rating.

Of the 64 volunteers who returned questionnaires, 56 said they had received training, and of these 51 rated it as good or very good, four rated it as average or poor, and one did not give a rating. The two most informative descriptions given by volunteers were these:

Three 2-hour sessions. We discussed what reading was – its importance. How to listen to children, correct, encourage, show easy ways for them to read words, etc. Went through targets of key stages 1, 2 and 3. Discussed use of expression, finding data from reference books, etc.

[The training] helped me to listen to children, how to help different levels of children, how to read together and give confidence even to the poorest reader.

In answer to a separate question in the questionnaire, 18 teachers said they had had support from the LEA staff during the year beyond the training. The LEA staff were accessible and supportive, visited the schools, and demonstrated the Project techniques in classrooms. They also held regular facilitators' meetings, from which information was brought back.

3.5 Commitment

Of the 23 teachers, eight currently held posts of responsibility for English, and 10 were currently Project facilitators. Eighteen said they had had extra duties during the year as a result of the Project. These included facilitators' meetings, keeping records, administering the NFER instruments, and a great deal of work with the volunteers – recruitment, training, support, monitoring and encouragement.

Both teachers and volunteers were asked about the manageability of the Project for them, and teachers also about its compatibility with the national curriculum. Only four teachers found the Project less than very compatible with the national curriculum.

Nineteen teachers found the Project very or fairly manageable, and only three considered it borderline in this respect. Of the three with serious doubts, one felt that the information provided was sketchy and too late, one felt the Project was outside her control, and the third said time had been a problem, particularly for paperwork – there had been no time allowance. Nine others mentioned the time problem.

Among the volunteers, 47 found it very manageable, 16 fairly so (the most frequent constraint being other commitments), and only one considered it borderline (no reason given).

One particularly strong reason for the volunteers' commitment to the Project was that 51 of them had, between them, about 100 children of their own in local

schools, especially the one where they were giving help. Of the other volunteers, four had grandchildren there, and one a cousin. Only six had no children in the system at the time, though two had had previously. Three worked in other capacities in the schools where they were volunteers, and only one denied any connection at all with the school in which she was helping.

3.6 Collaboration and job satisfaction

Both teachers and volunteers were asked about the impact of the Project on themselves and on each other (for volunteers this question was phrased in terms of their working relationship with teachers). Twenty teachers rated the impact of the Project on themselves as very or fairly successful, with only three rating it as borderline or unsuccessful. Of these three, one gave no reason, one said the Project had had hardly any impact on her, and the third said that not enough detail had been given about what techniques were to be used. The positive comments covered changes in attitudes, and (more frequently) in teachers' approaches. A particularly informative comment was this:

1. *Far more positive attitude to volunteers as I knew they'd been trained to help the children not only in listening to the reading but assessing the child's ability.*
2. *I have focused in on specific authors and talked about style, etc.*
3. *Introduced various activities associated with writing a book for Early Years:*
 - *planning*
 - *using computer*
 - *illustrations*
 - *printing*
 - *making a tape to go with the text.*

The sentiment about the beneficial impact on working relationships was reciprocated by the volunteers; they all felt that the impact here had been fairly or very successful. Greater approachability, and ease in discussing children's needs, were constantly mentioned, and appreciated; also support from the teachers. Some representative comments were:

Able to relate better with the teachers not only with regard to the Project but also other matters. Also I feel I have a better understanding of the problems faced by teachers and children alike due to reading difficulty. I felt that I was taking some weight off the class teacher and so felt purposeful and valued.

We have a good relationship, with more responsibility as the year progresses being given to me, i.e. changing books/keeping books/staying on a stage or moving up a stage is my responsibility.

I feel [the Project] enhanced parent/teacher relationships due to them working in partnership towards the same goal.

Again, all the volunteers felt the impact on themselves had been fairly or very successful. They felt more confidence in their dealings with the teachers, and in themselves. They felt that they understood reading and how children learn better, that they had been doing a useful and worthwhile job, and that they could help their own children more:

To my surprise, I found I developed my own reading skills.

I discovered the meanings of words which I had heard but never bothered to look up.

Personally, this course built up my own confidence and I discovered areas in which I was strong and others in which I was weak.

I would never have dreamed to ask children about authors and illustrators.

I now know many of the children better. I enjoy the relationship I have with them, and it's a good feeling to know that someone is improving with your help.

Now when I read with my children we talk about what they liked and disliked about the story rather than just closing the book.

Friday morning – highlight of the week.

And all the teachers felt that the impact on the volunteers had been beneficial, improving their skills, insight, enjoyment and commitment:

The parents grew in confidence as they learned from the training.

Both groups were also asked how much they felt they had got out of the Project. Sixteen teachers replied 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal', while only three replied 'nothing' or 'not a lot'. Of the latter, two had had little involvement; the other felt that she and the parents had been given too little information. The positive comments mentioned the benefit to the children, the better working relationships with the volunteers, and the opportunity it gave the teachers to develop their insights into reading, to cope better with the demands on them, and to broaden their focus and teaching.

All the volunteers felt they had got quite a lot or a great deal out of the Project. They mentioned variously the pleasure they had got out of doing a worthwhile

job, the growth in their knowledge, skills and confidence, the improvement in their own reading and in their relationships with children and teachers, and the benefit to the children. As one volunteer put it:

- A. *Knowledge of different reading techniques.*
- B. *Helping children with aspects they found difficult, and improving skills with already able readers.*
- C. *Recognition from the children and teachers.*
- D. *Enjoyment.*
- E. *Possibility of a future career.*

Fifty-two of the volunteers said they had plans for further involvement with the school where they were helping; in almost all cases they would continue to help with reading. Thirty-one said they had plans for further training or courses as a result of the Project; for several people, this included teacher training.

A final comment from a teacher sums up the enthusiasm engendered:

I hope to run courses for parents every year now - they are eager to learn for themselves and most of all eager to feel confident that they are doing things 'right' to help the children.

3.7 Summary of factors associated with the effectiveness of the Project

The supply of volunteers was substantial, and greater than in the previous year. This permitted most of the pupils involved to have much more individual reading time. There were extra resources, mainly in the form of books, to support this, and both the teachers and the volunteers involved had had effective training and support. High levels of commitment and enthusiasm were shown by the teachers and volunteers, and they generally expressed great satisfaction with the Project, and planned to continue both that form of provision and (in the case of the volunteers) their own development.

All of these factors appear to have been associated with the success of the Project, though there may have been others about which information was not collected. The findings on the impact of the Project on the teachers and volunteers can also be interpreted as further indications of the Project's effectiveness, as part of the 'virtuous circle' of the impact on the mass of pupils involved being reflected in turn in the adults' feelings of having been involved in a success story.

Chapter 4: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- The Knowsley Reading Project was a notable success for the great majority of the pupils involved. Their attitudes to reading and their reading habits had improved, and the test results showed clear and substantial improvement - a year and two-thirds' progress in one year. The principal aim of the Project was to benefit pupils who were of average potential but who were underachieving, and this aim was achieved. The general thrust of the Project in Year 6 would be well worth repeating and replicating, and broadening to other year groups.
- However, there remained a stubborn problem: the lowest achievers' attainment not only remained low but fell still further behind, and their attitudes to reading remained largely negative. Two high priorities for Knowsley Borough should be to focus on these pupils in their first year of secondary education, and to start a different programme for low achievers identified early in the primary school.
- The main factor associated with the effectiveness of the Project was the large amounts of volunteer time given to individual help with pupils' reading. This in turn could not have been so effective without the focused training provided for teachers and volunteers, and their commitment and enthusiasm, and the extra books.
- It will be for Knowsley LEA to calculate more precisely the *cost* of the Project. However, on general grounds it seems to have been a low-cost initiative, since the schools incurred few expenses, and the volunteers by definition gave their time free. The main financial item will have been the 'opportunity cost' of the LEA staff time given to this initiative rather than to other work. But given the success achieved for a good many pupils, and the opportunity for disseminating the approach to other schools in Knowsley (and beyond), the Project appears to have provided excellent value for money.

REFERENCES

- BLACKBURNE, L. (1995). 'Survey points to improved reading.' *Times Educational Supplement*, 15 December, 2.
- BROOKS, G., FOXMAN, D. and GORMAN, T.P. (1995a). *Standards in Literacy and Numeracy: 1948-1994* (National Commission on Education Briefing, new series, 7). London: NCE.
- BROOKS, G., FERNANDES, C., GORMAN, T.P. and WELLS, I. (1995b). *Reading Standards in Northern Ireland Revisited*. Slough: NFER for Department for Education in Northern Ireland.
- BROOKS, G., GORMAN, T.P., HUTCHISON, D., SCHAGEN, I. and NASTAT, P. (forthcoming). Report on the 1995 NFER Trends in Reading at 8 study.
- GORMAN, T.P. and FERNANDES, C. (1992). *Reading in Recession*. Slough: NFER.
- GORMAN, T.P., HUTCHISON, D. and TRIMBLE, J. (1993). *Reading in Reform: the Avon Collaborative Reading Project*. Slough: NFER.
- GORMAN, T.P., WHITE, J., BROOKS, G. and ENGLISH, F. (1991). *Language for Learning: a summary report on the 1988 APU surveys of language performance*. London: SEAC.
- KISPAL, A., GORMAN, T.P. and WHETTON, C. (1989). *The Reading Ability Series*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.
- SECONDARY HEADS ASSOCIATION (1995). *SHA Survey of Intake Tests in Secondary Schools* (with accompanying Press Release). London: SHA.
- TABBERER, R. and BROOKS, G. (1995). 'The way to read the signs.' *Times Educational Supplement*, 8 December, 14.

Appendix A: HOW THE EVALUATION WAS CARRIED OUT

A.1 The information collected

A. In June 1994

The Year 5 teachers whose pupils were tested were asked to provide a limited amount of essential background information about each of their pupils: date of birth, gender, whether English was the pupil's first language, and whether the pupil was receiving free school meals. They were also asked to fill in a very brief questionnaire about the manageability of the tests for the teachers who administered them, and about the suitability of the tests for their pupils.

The pupils involved were asked to complete an attitude questionnaire and to take a reading test.

The pupil attitude questionnaire was an adaptation of one which the NFER had used in the 1988 Assessment of Performance Unit Language Monitoring Project survey of the abilities in English of Year 6 pupils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – see Gorman *et al.* (1991, pp.54-58) for details of the results obtained then. The adaptation consisted of deleting items which concerned aspects of language other than reading, and/or required written answers more than a few words long.

The tests used were levels A-D of the *Reading Ability Series* (Kispal, Gorman and Whetton, 1989). The great majority of the pupils took level C, which is the most appropriate level of the series for pupils aged 10. However, it was agreed between NFER and the Project Co-ordinators that they and their colleagues teaching Year 5 should have the option to enter particularly able children for level D, and less able children for level B or even A.

Each level of the *Reading Ability Series* contains both a narrative and an expository text, with a range of questions on each. At level A, both are taken in one sitting of 60 minutes; at other levels they are taken in separate sittings of 45 minutes each. For this evaluation, the attitude questionnaire was administered in a further session; within reason, pupils were allowed as long as they needed to complete it.

The questionnaire was not a standardised instrument, and any improvement in pupils' attitudes would therefore have to be carefully interpreted before being accepted as 'greater progress than expected'. The tests used, however, were all standardised, and the scores of the standardisation samples could therefore be used as a control group. If between June 1994 and June 1995 Knowsley pupils made statistically significant gains in their average **standardised** scores, then this would be 'greater progress than expected'.

In addition to the more formal and quantitative information which NFER gathered, Year 6 teachers in the participating schools, and the Knowsley advisers, kept track of the more qualitative side of the Project, by observing their pupils and keeping their own logs.

B. In June 1995

The Year 6 teachers whose pupils were tested were again asked to provide a limited amount of essential background information about their pupils, but only on those pupils who had been tested in 1994, and on this occasion the only information requested was whether pupils were in receipt of free school meals, and their 1995 end of key stage 2 English results.

The teachers involved in the Project were also asked to complete a (longer) teacher questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix C). Similarly, as many as possible of the adult volunteers involved were asked to complete a volunteer questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix D). Both questionnaires asked for participants' perceptions and opinions of the Project, and were completed in the respondents' own time. The teacher questionnaire incorporated items repeated from 1994 about the manageability and suitability of the tests.

Pupils who had completed a test in 1994 were again asked to complete an attitude questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix E). The first two sections were identical to the 1994 instrument, and in 1995 there was a new third section which concentrated on pupils' perceptions of the Knowsley Reading Project's aims and impact.

The tests used were levels A, C, D and E of the *Reading Ability Series*. It was agreed between NFER and the Project Co-ordinators that

- pupils who had taken level A in 1994 should take level A again
- pupils who had taken level B in 1994 should take level C
- pupils who had taken level C in 1994 should take level D

- pupils who had taken level D in 1994, and for whom a standardised score on that level could **not** be calculated on that occasion, should take level D again (this was in order that their standardised scores for 1995 could be reported back to the schools)
- pupils who had taken level D in 1994, and for whom a standardised score on that level **was** calculated on that occasion, should take level E.

As a result, in 1995 the great majority of the pupils took level D, which is the most appropriate level of the series for pupils aged 11, with much smaller numbers taking the other levels.

A.2 Planned comparisons

The items on manageability and suitability within the teacher questionnaire were to be used for comparisons between the two years. Otherwise, since most of the teacher questionnaire and the whole of the volunteer questionnaire were administered only in 1995, they were not used for comparative purposes, but to suggest background factors for the quantitative results.

Similarly, the third section of the 1995 pupil questionnaire was intended to investigate background factors. The purpose of administering the first two sections of this questionnaire unaltered on both occasions was to detect any changes in pupils' reading habits and attitudes to reading over the year; as far as is known, this was the first occasion on which such an over-time comparison of pupils' reading habits and attitudes had been attempted.

The average standardised scores for the large group of pupils who took level C in 1994 and level D in 1995 would provide the major comparison of interest. However, less powerful quantitative comparisons would also be possible for most of the other pupils.

The purpose of collecting the pupils' key stage 2 English results was to allow a comparison and correlation between those results and the reading results gathered within the Project; this is likely to have been the largest such comparison available up to 1995.

This evaluation joins a series of projects which have used levels of the *Reading Ability Series* to provide objective information about pupils' gains, and/or about the trend of reading standards, and which have in turn provided valuable data on the functioning of the tests. Level A was used to compare the attainment

of Year 3 pupils in England and Wales in 1987 and 1991 (Gorman and Fernandes, 1992); the main finding was a drop of 2.5 standardised score points between 1987 and 1991. A further study in 1995, using the same test (Brooks *et al.*, forthcoming – see p. 10 of this report), found that the standard had returned to the 1987 level.

In 1992/93, levels C and D were used in the Avon Collaborative Reading Project, much as in this evaluation, to provide before-and-after measures for a group of 156 pupils moving from Year 5 to Year 6; over a period of seven months they made an average gain of 1.7 standardised score points (Gorman, Hutchison and Trimble, 1993; see especially p.12). In 1993, levels A and B were used to monitor the reading standards of pupils aged 8 in Northern Ireland, and level D the standard of pupils aged 11; the 11-year-olds were found to be about as far ahead of the 8-year-olds as would be expected from the difference in age, and the performance of both groups was found to be broadly comparable to that of pupils of the same ages who had taken part in earlier studies in England and Wales (Brooks *et al.*, 1995b).

Appendix B: THE SURVEYS OF PUPILS' ATTITUDES

B.1 The questionnaire

Past national surveys (such as those by the Assessment of Performance Unit) have indicated that positive attitudes towards reading benefit a child's reading attainment. Knowing whether a pupil can read is not sufficient: one also needs to know whether that child is choosing to read. Children motivated by enjoyment and purpose tend to read more, and hence continue to improve their skills.

An attitude survey can provide valuable insights into pupils' self-perceptions as readers. The pupil questionnaire for the Knowsley Reading Project, entitled *What do you think about reading?*, elicited information concerning pupils'

- enjoyment of reading
- ease or difficulty with reading
- independence in reading
- reading preferences
- reading habits
- (1995 only) opinions on the Project and its effects.

Information on the first five topics was drawn collectively from parts A and B, and on the last topic from part C, of the questionnaire, which took the following form:

Part A consisted of 34 statements to which pupils circled one of three responses (YES/Not sure/NO).

Part B consisted of 14 questions, some with multiple parts, resulting in a potential maximum of 24 responses. Pupil responses in this section were invited in three forms: Yes/No, multiple-choice selection or a very brief written response.

Part C (1995 only) consisted of 13 questions, one with multiple parts, resulting in a potential maximum of 19 responses. Pupil responses in this section too were invited in three forms: Yes/No, multiple-choice selection or a very brief written response.

Such 'self-report' measures have been shown to be the most accurate gauge of attitudes, although they are dependent on self-knowledge and memory. A pupil may also be affected by the desire to please or to give socially acceptable answers. In order to encourage honest responses, pupils were reminded that no answer was either right or wrong.

This section is based on the responses of 433 pupils who completed questionnaires in both years. Statistical data on pupils' responses included an item-by-item analysis by gender and by take-up of free school meals in both years, and by key stage 2 English level in 1995 only. Where no mention is made of differences between years, responses in the two years did not differ significantly. Where pupils achieving level 2 at key stage 2 in 1995 are mentioned, the one child who achieved level 1 is included.

B.2 Enjoyment of reading

Overall pleasure

Overall, three-quarters of the pupils surveyed claimed to enjoy reading, but in 1995 only 58 per cent of those achieving level 2 at key stage 2 claimed this. About a quarter (and significantly more of those achieving level 2 at key stage 2) – possibly although not necessarily the same children who did not enjoy reading – said they were unable to find books they wanted to read. In 1994, about a quarter of pupils described themselves as not interested in books, but in 1995 this figure had fallen to 18 per cent overall; this masked large differences according to key stage 2 level: level 2, 38 per cent; level 3, 21 per cent; levels 4 and 5, 6 per cent. Similarly, in 1994 30 per cent of the entire group claimed they could not recall reading anything enjoyable, but in 1995 this proportion had fallen to 19 per cent, though it remained at 38 per cent among those achieving level 2 at key stage 2.

A marked gender difference was apparent in enjoyment of reading, with two-thirds of boys but over 80 per cent of girls claiming to enjoy it.

Voluntary reading

Positive attitudes to reading correlate closely with the degree to which a child chooses to read when such activities are not imposed on him or her by the school. In 1994, just over a quarter of the sample said that they read only what they had to, or just in order to find out something. For slightly fewer, 20 per cent, the only books read were those provided by the teacher. In 1995, all three figures had fallen, to 17 per cent, 21 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively. In

that year there was also a strong association between these attitudes and key stage 2 level, with those achieving level 4 or 5 most positive in every case.

Whilst just over 50 per cent preferred playing out to reading books in both years, from 1994 to 1995 the proportion expressing the opposite preference fell (from 25 to 18 per cent). In both years, just over 50 per cent disagreed with the suggestion that their life outside school was too full to read, or that they were too busy doing other things to read at home. In both cases, positive responses on these items correlated strongly with key stage 2 level.

Enjoyment in reading at home can be taken as a meaningful indicator of reading undertaken willingly. In 1994, just under three-quarters agreed that they liked to do so, and in 1995 this figure had risen to 79 per cent. In both years about half further said that they liked reading by themselves for hours.

There appeared to be a marked gender difference in voluntary reading habits (see Table 5). Whilst in 1994 63 per cent of boys liked reading at home, the corresponding figure for girls was 82 per cent, and in 1995 both figures had risen. For about a quarter of boys, reading was functional only, whereas only about a sixth of girls read only when they had to or in order to find out something.

Table 5: Enjoyment of private reading

		BOYS			GIRLS		
		Yes %	No %	Not sure %	Yes %	No %	Not sure %
I like reading at home	1994	63	24	13	82	6	12
	1995	68	13	19	91	4	5
I like reading by myself for hours	1994	43	19	38	60	22	18
	1995	38	20	42	62	20	18

Just under half of pupils liked to read to help them understand their own and other people's problems.

Talking about books

Over half of pupils said they liked talking about books they had read, whereas 30 per cent actively did not. A higher proportion of girls than of boys enjoyed this activity (just over 60 per cent, as opposed to roughly 50 per cent).

Reading aloud with expression appeared to be comparatively a less popular practice. Those who actively disliked doing so outnumbered those who enjoyed it (43 to 34 per cent).

B.3 Ease or difficulty of reading

Whilst nearly half of the pupils surveyed (and, in 1995, only a fifth of those at key stage 2 levels 4 and 5) said that it took them a long time to read most books, only about 15 per cent (but 40 per cent of those at key stage 2 level 2) claimed to find reading difficult. About 60 per cent were confident enough in their reading ability to find some books in the class library too easy for them (again, the proportion was lowest among those at key stage 2 level 2), leaving only about one pupil in seven at instructional level or worse with library books. Confidence decreased, however, when applied to books used in class. Between a third and a quarter found some of these too difficult, and only just over 40 per cent (but many more of those at key stage 2 levels 4 and 5) asserted they had no problem with them. Reported difficulty with class books was higher amongst pupils on free school meals.

On two further questions, boys again displayed a greater aversion to print than girls. About a third of pupils wished that books had more pictures and less writing, with just under half wishing the opposite. About two-fifths of boys wished that books had more pictures and less writing, contrasted with just under 30 per cent of girls. In 1994, 39 per cent of pupils overall and 47 per cent of boys felt they did better in subjects where a lot of reading was not required; in 1995, these proportions had fallen to 36 and 42 per cent respectively, while the proportion of girls saying this remained unchanged at 29 per cent (see Table 6).

Table 6: Difficulty with reading

		BOYS			GIRLS		
		Yes %	No %	Not sure %	Yes %	No %	Not sure %
I wish that books had less writing and more pictures	1994	43	38	19	29	50	21
	1995	36	19	45	26	24	51
I do better in subjects where I don't have to read a lot	1994	47	25	27	28	32	40
	1995	42	26	32	29	32	40

On both questions, positive attitudes were highest in 1995 among pupils at key stage 2 levels 4 and 5, and lowest among those at level 2.

B.4 Independence in reading

Independence in reading is a chief aim of a literacy programme. An overwhelming majority of pupils (93 per cent) agreed that they liked to choose their own books. Most also felt confident in the use of a library to find things out, though in 1994 the average rating of 65 per cent affirming this masked a significant gender difference of 71 per cent for girls and 62 per cent for boys. In 1995, however, this difference had disappeared; there was no longer a significant difference in opinion between girls (65 per cent) and boys (61 per cent).

On the question of whether pupils like to go off to read by themselves the overall figure was just over 60 per cent in both years, and in both years the gender difference was significant (boys, just below 60 per cent; girls, about 70 per cent – see Table 7). Opinions on this item differed significantly according to key stage 2 level, with those at level 2 lowest.

Table 7: Independence in reading

		BOYS			GIRLS		
		Yes %	No %	Not sure %	Yes %	No %	Not sure %
I like going off and reading silently by myself	1994	59	22	19	73	13	14
	1995	58	14	28	70	18	13

Active engagement with the text is indicated by pupils who like asking a lot of questions about the books they have read. Although about a third of pupils enjoyed doing so, almost half chose the 'No' option for this statement rather than the more diffident 'Not sure'. However, a higher degree of independence was reflected in responses to the statement, 'I prefer listening to a story being read out to reading it by myself'. Here, nearly half the sample (46 per cent) preferred independent reading to 'story time', and again this attitude was strongest in 1995 among those at key stage 2 levels 4 and 5.

B.5 Reading preferences

Reading and television

Many more pupils overall preferred watching television to reading (nearly half the sample), and this figure did not alter between the two years. On the opposite opinion, however, there was a significant difference: just over a quarter preferred reading to television in 1994, but in 1995 this had fallen to 19 per cent. The preference for television was more marked amongst boys (rather more than half chose it, compared with 35 to 40 per cent of girls – see Table 8).

Table 8: Preference for television over books

		BOYS			GIRLS		
		Yes %	No %	Not sure %	Yes %	No %	Not sure %
I prefer watching television to reading books	1994	52	26	22	41	27	32
	1995	58	27	15	35	41	24

Reading materials

The types of reading material pupils encounter will necessarily influence their future choices and tastes. Section A of the pupils' reading questionnaire included several statements probing preferences for a few genres of text: stories, non-fiction, comics and poems.

- A great majority of pupils (78 per cent) liked reading **stories**, although fewer, 58 per cent, preferred them to information books. A further fifth to a quarter of the sample claimed the reverse, a positive preference for information books over stories. Preference for stories over informational texts was expressed by a greater percentage of girls than boys (60 to 55 per cent), a bias that was even more marked in relation to the simple, non-comparative statement, 'I like reading stories'. Here, over 80 per cent of girls agreed, as against about 70 per cent of boys.
- In the sample as a whole, a preference for stories similarly won out over reading about one's hobbies, although the demarcation was less emphatic than when stories were compared with informational texts. Nearly half preferred stories to hobby reading, and 32 per cent the reverse. Once again, girls showed a partiality for stories above all: only 21 per cent preferred hobby reading to fiction, against 40 per cent of boys.

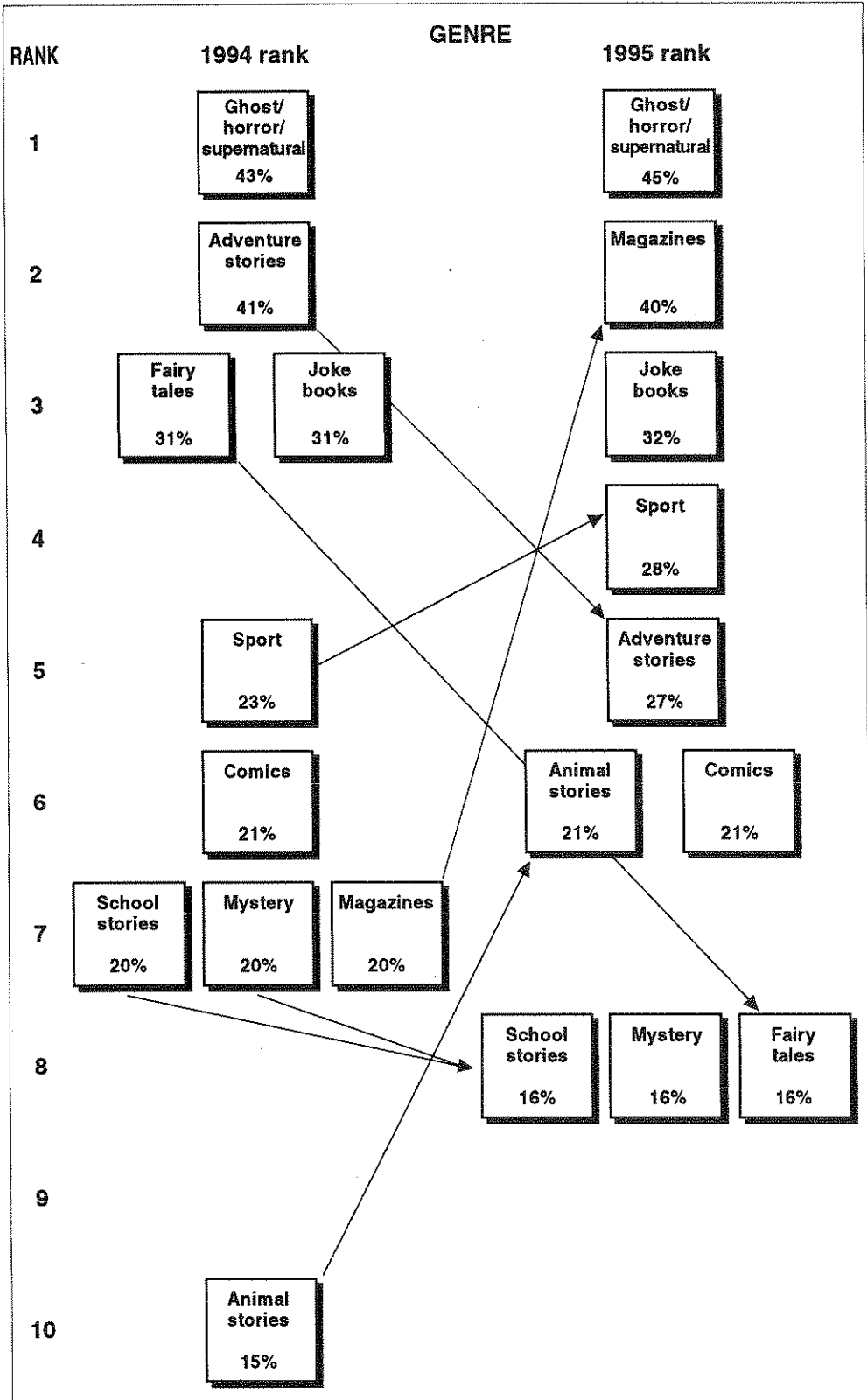
- In response to the simple statement, 'I like reading **non-fiction**', nearly a half of all pupils agreed and over a quarter disagreed. In this non-comparative context, no significant gender differences emerged.
- In 1994, books were preferred to **comics**, magazines and annuals as reading material. Pupils' opinions on this point were gauged through two matched, opposing but separately placed statements. Results were close and consistent across the two, averaging at 45 per cent who preferred books and 34 per cent who preferred comics. In 1995, however, the difference had disappeared; each preference was expressed by 28 per cent.
- Within this general picture, the 1994 preference for books over comics emerged more strongly amongst those pupils on free school meals (52 per cent of this group as opposed to 38 per cent of the rest), though this difference had also disappeared by 1995. And whilst nearly twice as many boys chose comics as did girls, their preference was less strong than that of girls for books.
- Although 17 per cent claimed not to enjoy **poetry**, nearly three-quarters of pupils agreed with the statement, 'I like reading poems'. The taste for poetry was more marked amongst girls, 85 per cent of whom liked poems (contrasted with 63 per cent of boys) and, albeit less emphatically, amongst free school meal pupils.

Section B of the pupils' questionnaire incorporated a list of 21 genres of text, from which pupils were invited to select three to represent their favourite types – see Figure 2.

The most noticeable change between 1994 and 1995 was the rise of magazines and animal stories, and the corresponding fall of adventure stories and fairy tales. Significant gender differences appeared within a few categories. Girls indicated stronger preferences than boys for fairy tales (42 to 22 per cent in 1994; 22 to 11 per cent in 1995, in itself a significant shift) and for magazines (29 to 12 per cent in 1994; 52 to 29 per cent in 1995 – again a significant change). Both of these changes might be seen as reflecting maturing tastes. (Teenage stories, however, were selected by only six per cent of the entire sample in 1994, and 10 per cent in 1995.) A greater proportion of boys, in turn, preferred sports books (selected by 35 per cent of boys and seven per cent of girls in 1994, the 1995 figures being 40 and 14 per cent), comics (28 to 13 per cent in 1994, 32 to nine per cent in 1995) and, in 1994, non-fiction (12 to five per cent; in 1995 equal at eight per cent).

The only statistically significant difference in response to this item between pupils on free school meals and others appeared in the category of Ghost and Horror stories. Forty-eight per cent of free school meal pupils selected them as a favourite, as compared with about 40 per cent of the other children.

Figure 2: 'Top Ten' genres of reading material



Section B of the questionnaire also asked pupils whether they had a favourite book or author, and 81 per cent replied in the affirmative in 1994, with a significant rise to 87 per cent in 1995. When asked whether they had enjoyed reading any fiction or non-fiction in the last year, pupils gave strikingly different responses to the two categories and in the two years. In 1994, whilst 69 per cent of children could think of some non-fiction work they had recently enjoyed (once again a more common response from boys), only 36 per cent felt they had enjoyed any work of fiction that year. However, by 1995 these figures had altered to 57 per cent (a significant fall) and 78 per cent, a highly significant increase.

B.6 Favourite books and authors

Pupils were invited to supply a name for their favourite book and/or author, a work of fiction they had enjoyed within the last year and where they had obtained it, and a work of non-fiction recently enjoyed. They were also asked for their favourite magazine or comic, and invited to supply an example of a work in each of their three preferred genres selected from a long list.

Overall there was a huge diversity of responses. Almost as many books and authors were put forward as the number of pupils participating. Some pupils appeared to have a problem spelling their authors' names, and additionally tended to give the subject matter of the chosen book rather than its title (especially in the case of non-fiction). Within many pupils' questionnaires the same book was repeatedly cited, falling for example into the category of 'all-time' favourite book, favourite work of fiction, and example of an adventure or other genre of book. It would seem that such pupils were either readers of small appetite, who had to make the one book read in a while do service to all questions, or that the book read most recently was the one remembered most vividly. Another phenomenon was the citation of the same book by several pupils from the same school. Perhaps this book had been read or at least recommended to the class by their teacher, or perhaps children had passed it around amongst themselves.

When asked to name their favourite book or author, pupils much more frequently responded with the former. Titles were enormously diverse, ranging from *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Railway Children* to *Star Trek*, *Day of the Jackal* and *The Jolly Postman*. The only titles quoted more than once each were (1994) *Vlad the Drac*, *Where's Wally*, (1995) *Dirty Beasts*, *Goose Bumps*, *Running Away* by Pat Edwards, and many of Roald Dahl's works (both years; especially *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *Revolt Rhymes*, *Matilda*, *The Twits*, *The Witches*, *The BFG* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*). Roald Dahl emerged very strongly as the favourite

author, although others mentioned (if not always correctly spelt) included (1994) Hazel Townson, Berlie Doherty and Shirley Hughes, (1995) Dick King Smith, Anne Fine and Louisa May Alcott, and (both years) Enid Blyton.

A similarly broad range of answers were supplied to represent fiction enjoyed in the last year. Most pupils were able to name the author of their chosen title, and again these included very many names, from 'classics' such as Michael Bond (*Paddington*), E.B. White (*Charlotte's Web*) and Susan M. Coolidge (*What Katy Did*) to modern classics like Alf Proysen (*Mrs Pepperpot to the Rescue*), Dick King Smith (*Harry Mad*) and Betsy Byars (*The Eighteenth Emergency*). Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton recurred on this question too, although their presence was by no means heavily disproportionate to the other authors mentioned. The only notable changes between 1994 and 1995 were that Enid Blyton declined to a single mention, and that Anne Fine came into the list with eight (seven for *Crummy Mummy and Me*).

Most children had found their enjoyed work of fiction either in the class or school library (about equal numbers for each in 1994; rather more from the class library in 1995). In 1994, approximately one in five had got it from a shop (not necessarily purchased with their own money); this proportion had apparently fallen in 1995. As is reflected by the frequency of usage reported elsewhere in the questionnaire, for only a small number was the source a public library, and hardly any favourite fiction books were acquired as presents, in either year.

When asked to give the title of a non-fiction book they had liked, a substantial minority of pupils cited topics (such as 'animals', 'sport' or 'cars') instead. This was in contrast to their responses in the fiction category, where titles were given, if occasionally inaccurately. The same tendency to quote subject matter rather than title re-appeared in the non-fiction category of the genre-list. Even more than with favourite works of fiction, non-fiction titles were as numerous as pupils participating. However, certain themes emerged: topics enjoyed included space, history, school, animals, nature, health and sports.

Favourite magazines and comics were less diverse, presumably reflecting the relative lack of choice in the market. In 1994, the *Beano* had the largest number of mentions, followed by *Smash Hits* and *Soccer Stars*; in 1995 *Smash Hits* was top, followed by *Shoot* and the *Beano*. Traditional boys' magazines (*Spiderman*, *Buster*) were mentioned more often than girls' (*Bunty*, *Just 17*).

Pupils then selected three favourite text types and were asked to name an example of each. Whilst overall this item revealed that pupils had a sound understanding of genre types and were able to cite appropriate examples, a few mismatches occurred. (A similar slight confusion was apparent in earlier

questions, with *The BFG* being given as a comic, and *The Little Vampire* as a work of non-fiction.) Acting on the trigger of its title, some pupils gave *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* as an example of a teenage story; another put Sherlock Holmes in this category, perhaps interpreting teenage stories as those written for, rather than about, teenagers. Sometimes a given work recurred in several genre categories: *Mrs Pepperpot to the Rescue*, for example, was classified both as an adventure story and a school story; *Indiana Jones* as both adventure and mystery; and *Soccer Stars* was defined both as sport and a magazine. This indicates, reasonably, that a given work may fall into at least two categories. Comics and magazines, particularly, betrayed a high degree of overlap: pupils appeared confused as to the difference between the two.

Under fairy tales, both folk tales (*Snow White*, *Cinderella*) and myths and legends (*Theseus and the Minotaur*) were given, together with modern variations such as Roald Dahl's *Revolt Rhymes*. Nursery rhymes too appeared in this group.

Ghost, Horror and Supernatural stories and joke books were as varied as their contributors – no single title appeared to be quoted more than once.

School and mystery stories were similarly varied and embraced both traditional titles (Sherlock Holmes stories) and the relatively modern (*The Secret Seven*). Favourite comics and magazines were repeated from the earlier question in approximately the same league table. Few pupils mentioned newspapers, but for those who did, the *Sun*, the *Star* and the *Liverpool Echo* were enjoyed.

B.7 Reading habits

Attitudes can be inferred from behaviour. Questions in this section required pupils to gauge the amount of time spent reading each week in various circumstances and the frequency of their library usage. These remaining data may therefore be more susceptible to inaccurate recall or estimation.

Use of libraries

- ◆ ***School library*** Nearly one in five children never chose books from the school library. Seventy-seven per cent of children using school libraries borrowed books at least once or twice a month; of these, 51 per cent were taking books out at least once a week.

- ◆ **Public library** Fewer pupils made use of their public library than the one in school. In 1994, 43 per cent never borrowed books from the public library, but by 1995 this had declined significantly, to 35 per cent. Of those who did use a public library, just over half used it at least once or twice per month.

Girls' borrowing from public libraries exceeded that of boys at all frequencies of use down to once or twice a month. Possibly boys' library usage in general was more dependent on the influence of a class teacher.

Time spent reading

- ◆ **Fiction** Most children who read fiction for their own pleasure did so for either one or two hours each week (44 per cent in 1994, 32 per cent in 1995, a significant fall indicating a general *increase* in time spent reading). At these levels, boys were disproportionately represented. Amongst those who read for three hours each week (10 per cent of the sample), more were girls.
- ◆ **Non-fiction** More children spent one or two hours a week reading this genre of text for their own pleasure than fiction (52 per cent in 1994, 45 per cent in 1995, again a significant fall), but about the same proportion read non-fiction for three hours a week (10 per cent). The proportion of pupils who never read any non-fiction was three to four times as large as the proportion who never read fiction.
- ◆ **Reading with the teacher**
- ◆ **Reading with another adult at school**
- ◆ **Reading with an adult at home**

For data on these items, see Figure 2 in chapter 3 of the main report (p. 20).

Number of books owned

Only 10 per cent of pupils owned no books whatsoever in 1994, and by 1995 this had fallen to seven per cent. Otherwise, the number of pupils falling into the various degrees of book ownership was evenly spread, up to a ceiling of 100 books. Most commonly, for about a fifth of children, between one and ten books were owned; but 16 per cent said they owned more than 100. Free school meal pupils were likely to own the smaller quantities of books (up to 25). In higher categories of ownership the other group of pupils had greater representation, presumably reflecting their family's greater financial resources. Book ownership also tended to increase with 1995 key stage 2 level.

B.8 Summary of main findings on pupils' attitudes

Enjoyment of reading

Although enjoyment of reading was expressed most strongly by girls, it was felt by three-quarters of all pupils in the survey. These children did not restrict their reading to the minimum necessary to cope with daily demands; they read at home willingly, many for hours. For about half of this year group (and especially the girls), reading was preferred to other activities (except TV), and the opportunity to talk about books was welcomed.

Ease or difficulty with reading

Only one in six of pupils reported experiencing serious difficulties with reading, although a third to a quarter of the entire group (and especially those on free school meals) sometimes found the books used in class too difficult. Boys appeared to find the reading process more problematic, feeling happier when a book or a school subject placed fewer reading demands on them.

Independence in reading

The great majority of pupils felt confident in choosing their own reading material and in using libraries. Solitary reading was a popular activity, a preference that may feasibly be connected with the finding that the biggest group of respondents did not willingly ask questions about the books they had read.

Reading preferences

Stories were liked by most children, and chosen over informational reading or books on hobbies. Both boys and girls showed this preference for stories over non-fiction. In 1994, whilst most pupils could think of a work of non-fiction they had enjoyed in the last year, only a third could remember such a fiction book. By 1995, however, though the proportion who could recall such a work of non-fiction had declined somewhat, the proportion who could recall a work of fiction that they had enjoyed had more than doubled.

Three-quarters of pupils, especially girls, liked poetry. In 1994, books in general were chosen over comics, magazines or annuals, though this difference had disappeared by 1995. The four most popular genres in 1994 were: ghost/horror/supernatural; adventure stories; fairy tales (particularly for girls); and joke books. In 1995 the four most popular genres were: ghost/horror/supernatural; magazines; joke books; and sport.

For boys especially but for a majority of these children, television was a more popular activity than reading.

Favourite books and authors

The range of books and authors was extremely diverse, and very few pupils had difficulty in stating genre preferences, or in naming a favourite book and author.

Reading habits

More use was being made of the school library than the public library.

In 1994, nearly half of children reading fiction for their own pleasure were doing so for one or two hours each week. Those reading for longer durations tended to be girls. A larger group was spending one or two hours reading non-fiction. In 1995, voluntary reading had on average increased.

Nine in ten of pupils owned some books, most usually up to ten in number. Book ownership increased between 1994 and 1995.

Pupil characteristics

Girls tended to have more positive attitudes than boys, and to read more. There were few significant differences between pupils receiving and those not receiving free school meals. Very consistent differences were found according to 1995 key stage 2 level: those at higher levels tended to own more books, to read more, and to have more positive attitudes.

Appendices C—E:
**COPIES OF 1995 TEACHER, VOLUNTEER
AND PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRES**

In the following pages the 1995 teacher, volunteer and pupil questionnaires are reproduced.

Please note that all these questionnaires were originally A4 size and have been reduced to approximately two-thirds of their original size.

Appendix C:
THE 1995 TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT

Teachers –
What do *you* think about the
Knowsley Reading Project?

As you know, Year 6 pupils in your school have been involved in the Knowsley Reading Project during this school year (1994/95). NFER is evaluating the Project for Knowsley Local Education Authority, and we would welcome your views on the Project. We hope you will help us by filling in this questionnaire. Your views will be confidential to the NFER research team, and no person or school will be identified in our report.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please hand it by **23 June** in a sealed envelope to the Reading Project coordinator in your school, who will send it on to us.

If you have any queries, please feel free to write to or telephone the leader of the NFER evaluation, Dr Greg Brooks, NFER, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough SL1 2DQ, Tel: 01753 574123 ext. 356.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.

Your school _____

Your name _____

Day Month

Today's date

--	--

About Yourself

- 1. *(please circle)* Male / Female
- 2. Number of years teaching experience
- 3. Do you currently hold a post of responsibility for English/language? YES / NO
- 4. Are you responsible for facilitating the Project in your school? YES / NO
- 5. Which year group(s) do you teach?
- 6. How many Year 6 pupils are in your class?

N.B. If your answer to q. 6 is None, do not answer questions 11 & 12.

About the Project: Training

- 7. Did you receive training for the Project? YES / NO
- 8. If YES, how would you rate the training?
(please circle one) Very good/good/average/poor/very poor
- 9. If you answered YES to q. 7, please describe the training here, including comments on the effectiveness of each element:

About the Project: Implementation

10. In which month did Project volunteers start working with pupils in your school? *(please tick one)*
- | | |
|---------|--------------------------|
| Sept 94 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Oct 94 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nov 94 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dec 94 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jan 95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Feb 95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mar 95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

N.B. If your answer to q. 6 was None, do not answer questions 11 & 12.

11. How many adult volunteers have worked with Year 6 pupils in your class this year?

12. Relative to last school year is this
(please circle one) more / about the same / fewer?

13. Would you say that your *class* library has more books in it now than at the beginning of the school year, or fewer, or about the same?
(please circle one) more books / about the same / fewer books

14. Would you say that your *school* library has more books in it now than at the beginning of the school year, or fewer, or about the same?
(please circle one) more books / about the same / fewer books

15. For each of the following types of book, please say whether you have made more use of them this school year:

author collections	YES / NO
fiction	YES / NO
non-fiction	YES / NO
poetry	YES / NO

16. This year, have you had any other extra resources (human, financial or material) to help implement the Project?

YES / NO

17. If YES, please give brief details here:

18. Have you had any additional duties this year as a result of the Project?
YES / NO

19. If Yes, please give brief details here:

20. How manageable have you found the Project?

(please circle one) very manageable/fairly manageable/
borderline/unmanageable

21. If you gave any answer other than 'very manageable' to q. 20,
please comment here:

22. Has support for your involvement in the Project been provided this year
by the Advisers and/or the school Facilitator? YES / NO

23. If Yes, please give brief details here:

24. How would you rate the compatibility of the Project with the National
Curriculum?

(please circle one) very compatible/fairly compatible/
borderline/incompatible

25. If you gave any answer other than 'very compatible' to q. 24,
please comment here:

N.B. On this page and the next, please answer only the questions which apply to the tests actually used in your school.

Manageability of the tests: how manageable were the tests for the teacher(s) who administered them, in terms of preparation, administration and class organisation?

Please circle one letter in each row below to show your ratings of the manageability of the tests, first overall and then for each test individually:

		Very manageable	Fairly manageable	Borderline	Unmanageable
26.	Overall	V	F	B	U
27.	Reading Ability Series Test A	V	F	B	U
28.	Reading Ability Series Test C	V	F	B	U
29.	Reading Ability Series Test D	V	F	B	U
30.	Reading Ability Series Test E	V	F	B	U
31.	If you have any comments on the manageability of the tests for the teacher(s) who administered them, please give details here:				

Suitability of the tests: how suitable were the tests, in your opinion, for pupils in Year 6?

Please circle one letter in each row below to show your ratings of the suitability of the tests, first overall and then for each test individually:

		Very suitable	Fairly suitable	Borderline	Unsuitable
26.	Overall	V	F	B	U
27.	Reading Ability Series Test A	V	F	B	U
28.	Reading Ability Series Test C	V	F	B	U
29.	Reading Ability Series Test D	V	F	B	U
30.	Reading Ability Series Test E	V	F	B	U

37. If you considered that any of the tests was **not** suitable, please give details here:

About the Project: Impact

38. How would you rate the impact of the Project on the pupils involved?

(please circle one) very successful/fairly successful/
borderline/unsuccessful

39. Please describe the impact of the Project on the pupils involved:

40. How would you rate the impact of the Project on the volunteers involved?

(please circle one) very successful / fairly successful /
borderline / unsuccessful

41. Please describe the impact of the Project on the volunteers involved:

42. How would you rate the impact of the Project on yourself?

(please circle one) very successful / fairly successful /
borderline / unsuccessful

43. Please describe the impact of the Project on yourself, giving details of any changes in your approach, attitudes or thinking:

The Project and You

44. How much do you feel you got out of the Project?

(please circle one) A great deal/quite a lot/not a lot/nothing

45. Please describe what you got out of the Project:

46. Would you have any recommendations for others involved in such a Project?

YES / NO

47. If YES, please give brief details here:

48. If you have any other comments, please make them here:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR FILLING IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Appendix D:
THE 1995 VOLUNTEER QUESTIONNAIRE

KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT

**Volunteers –
What do *you* think about the
Knowsley Reading Project?**

As you know, the help you have been giving to Year 6 pupils (10- to 11-year-olds) during this school year (1994/95) has been part of the Knowsley Reading Project. NFER is evaluating the Project for Knowsley Local Education Authority, and we would welcome your views on the Project. We hope you will help us by filling in this questionnaire. Your views will be confidential to the NFER research team, and no person or school will be identified in our report.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please hand it in a sealed envelope to the Reading Project coordinator in your school, who will send it on to us. Please complete it and return it by **23 June**.

If you have any queries, please feel free to write to or telephone the leader of the NFER evaluation, Dr Greg Brooks, NFER, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough SL1 2DQ, Tel: 01753 574123 ext. 356.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.

Your school _____

Your name _____

Day Month
Today's date

--	--

About Yourself

1. *(please circle one)* Male / Female
2. Please give a brief description of your qualifications and current or previous occupation:

3. Please give a brief description of your previous experience of working with children:

4. How did you get to know about the Project?

5. What is your link with the local schools?

6. Do you have any children attending local schools? YES / NO
7. If Yes, how many?
8. What are their ages? _____

About the Project: Training

9. Did you receive training for the Project? YES / NO
10. If YES, how would you rate the training?
(please circle one) Very good/good/average/poor/very poor
11. If you answered YES to q. 9, please describe the training here, including comments on the effectiveness of each element:

About the Project: Implementation

12. How many Year 6 pupils have you worked with this year?
13. How many pupils in other years have you worked with this year?
14. In which month did you start working with Year 6 pupils?

(please tick one)

Sept 94	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oct 94	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov 94	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dec 94	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jan 95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feb 95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mar 95	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. How manageable have you found your involvement in the Project?
(please circle one) very manageable/fairly manageable/
borderline/unmanageable

16. If you gave any answer other than 'very manageable' to q. 15, please comment here:
-
-

About the Project: Impact

17. How would you rate the impact of the Project on the children involved?

(please circle one) very successful/fairly successful/
borderline/unsuccessful

18. Please describe the impact of the Project on the children:

19. How would you rate the impact of the Project on your working relationship with the teachers involved?

(please circle one) very successful/fairly successful/
borderline/unsuccessful

20. Please describe how the Project has affected your working relationship with the teachers:

21. How would you rate the impact of the Project on yourself?

(please circle one)

very successful/fairly successful/
borderline/unsuccessful

22. Please describe the impact of the Project on yourself:

The Project and You

23. How much do you feel you got out of the Project?

(please circle one)

A great deal/quite a lot/not a lot/nothing

24. Please describe what you got out of the Project:

25. Would you have any recommendations for others involved
in such a Project?

YES / NO

26. If YES, please give brief details here:

27. Do you have plans for further involvement with the school? YES / NO

28. If YES, please give brief details here:

29. Do you have plans for further training or courses as a result of the Project? YES / NO

30. If YES, please give brief details here:

31. If you have any other comments, please make them here:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN AND SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT, AND FOR FILLING IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Appendix E:
THE 1995 PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE

KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT

**What do *you* think
about reading?**

--	--

Today's date

© National Foundation for Educational Research 1995

This questionnaire about reading is in three parts.

In PART A you will find a series of comments which many 11-year-olds have made about reading. Some of these you will agree with, others you will disagree with.

In PART B you have space to express your own views in response to some questions about choosing books and television programmes.

In PART C you will find some questions about the Knowsley Reading Project.

When you have finished Part A, please go on to Part B without waiting to be told, and similarly with Part B.

There are no right or wrong 'answers' to any of these questions.

All your replies will be secret, so please take your time and decide what you honestly feel.

PART A

This section consists of statements about attitudes to reading. Most of these thoughts have been expressed by other eleven-year-olds. Some of the statements may be ones you agree with, while others may seem quite untrue to you. We would like you to tell us what your own views and feelings are by responding to these statements in a way which is true for you. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please read each of the sentences below and decide whether you agree with what it says or not. If you agree with what the sentence says, draw a circle around 'YES'. If you do NOT agree with the sentence, draw a circle around 'NO'. If you're not sure, draw a circle round 'Not sure'. Do this for each sentence.

1. I enjoy reading.	YES	Not sure	NO
2. I cannot find any books I want to read.	YES	Not sure	NO
3. I like to choose my own books.	YES	Not sure	NO
4. I find reading difficult.	YES	Not sure	NO
5. I like reading stories.	YES	Not sure	NO
6. I only read what I have to.	YES	Not sure	NO
7. I like reading non-fiction.	YES	Not sure	NO
8. Outside school I only read if I want to find out something.	YES	Not sure	NO
9. I like reading by myself for hours.	YES	Not sure	NO
10. It takes me a long time to read most books.	YES	Not sure	NO

11.	I like reading at home.	YES	Not sure	NO
12.	I only read books provided by my teacher.	YES	Not sure	NO
13.	I prefer watching television to reading books.	YES	Not sure	NO
14.	I enjoy using a library to find things out.	YES	Not sure	NO
15.	I wish that books had less writing and more pictures.	YES	Not sure	NO
16.	I prefer listening to a story being read out to reading it by myself.	YES	Not sure	NO
17.	Some of the books in the class library are too easy for me.	YES	Not sure	NO
18.	I like to read aloud with expression.	YES	Not sure	NO
19.	I prefer playing out to reading books.	YES	Not sure	NO
20.	I like to read to help me to understand my own and other people's personal problems.	YES	Not sure	NO
21.	My life outside school is too full for reading.	YES	Not sure	NO
22.	I prefer reading comic books and annuals to other sorts of books.	YES	Not sure	NO
23.	I like talking about books I've read.	YES	Not sure	NO
24.	I like going off and reading silently by myself.	YES	Not sure	NO
25.	I would rather read stories than information books.	YES	Not sure	NO
26.	Some of the books we use in class are too difficult for me.	YES	Not sure	NO

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----------|----|
| 27. | I am not interested in books. | YES | Not sure | NO |
| 28. | I like reading poems. | YES | Not sure | NO |
| 29. | I am too busy doing other things to read at home. | YES | Not sure | NO |
| 30. | I prefer reading books to reading comics and magazines. | YES | Not sure | NO |
| 31. | I cannot remember reading anything I have enjoyed. | YES | Not sure | NO |
| 32. | I like to ask a lot of questions about the books I've read. | YES | Not sure | NO |
| 33. | I do better in subjects where I don't have to read a lot. | YES | Not sure | NO |
| 34. | I prefer reading about my hobbies to reading stories. | YES | Not sure | NO |

PART B

These questions are about your choice of books and television programmes. If a question requires the answer YES or NO, circle YES if you agree with the statement, NO if you don't.

1. Have you a favourite book or author? YES/NO _____
2. Please write the name(s) here. _____
3. Have you read any fiction this year (1995) which you have enjoyed? YES/NO _____
 - a) If so, please give the name of **one** of the books you have enjoyed. _____
 - b) What was the writer's name? _____
 - c) Where did you obtain the book, e.g. from a school library, class library, public library, shop, etc?

4. Did you read the book as part of your schoolwork? YES/NO _____
 - a) Have you read any non-fiction this year (1995) which you have enjoyed? YES/NO _____
 - b) If so, please give the name of **one** of the books you have enjoyed. _____
5. Have you a favourite magazine or comic? YES/NO _____
 - a) Please write its name or title here. _____

6. What kinds of books do you most prefer to read? Tick 3 (✓), and for each one write the name of a book that you have enjoyed

1		Fairy tales (myth and legend)
2		Ghost, Horror and Supernatural
3		Adventure stories
4		Teenage stories
5		Mystery
6		Science Fiction
7		School stories
8		Love stories
9		TV stories
10		Animal stories
11		War Stories
12		Non-fiction
13		Sport
14		Nature books
15		Autobiographies/biographies
16		Newspaper
17		Comics
18		Annuals
19		Joke books
20		Magazine
21		Books about other countries

7. Do you choose books from a library at school? YES/NO
 If so, how often do you borrow books from that library? *Please circle the answer:*
 (a) more than once a week (b) once a week (e) seldom or never
 (c) once or twice a month (d) once a year
8. On average, about how many hours a week do you spend on reading fiction for your own pleasure?
 _____ hours a week
9. On average, about how many hours a week do you spend on reading non-fiction for your own pleasure?
 _____ hours a week
10. Do you borrow books from a public library? YES/NO
 If so, how often do you borrow books? *Please circle the answer:*
 (a) more than once a week (b) once a week
 (c) once or twice a month (d) once a year (e) seldom or never
11. About how many non-school books do you personally own?
Please circle the answer: a) 0 b) 1-10, c) 11-25, d) 26-50, e) 51-99, f) more than 100.
12. How many times a week do you read with your teacher?
Please circle the answer: a) none b) 1 c) 2 d) 3 e) 4 f) 5 g) more than 5
13. How many times a week do you read with an adult at home?
Please circle the answer: a) none b) 1 c) 2 d) 3 e) 4 f) 5 g) more than 5
14. How many times a week do you read with an adult at school who is not your teacher?
Please circle the answer: a) none b) 1 c) 2 d) 3 e) 4 f) 5 g) more than 5

PART C

This section contains questions about the Knowsley Reading Project which has been going on in your school (and others near where you live) this year (1995).

1. Have you heard about the Knowsley Reading Project? YES NO

2. If you have, please tell us briefly what you have heard about it: _____

3. Would you say that your *class* library has more books in it now than at the beginning of the school year, or fewer, or about the same?

1 2 3
(please circle one) more books / about the same / fewer books

4. Would you say that your *school* library has more books in it now than at the beginning of the school year, or fewer, or about the same?

1 2 3
(please circle one) more books / about the same / fewer books

5. We'd like to know who has given you help with reading this year:

Please tick all that are true:

<input type="checkbox"/>	teachers
<input type="checkbox"/>	other adults
<input type="checkbox"/>	your parent(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	a brother or sister
<input type="checkbox"/>	another relative
<input type="checkbox"/>	a friend
<input type="checkbox"/>	other pupils

6. Would you say that the amount of help you've had with reading this year has been more than last year (when you were in Year 5), or less, or about the same? 1 2 3

(please circle one) more help with reading / about the same / less help with reading
YES/NO

7. This year, have you read to younger pupils in your school? _____

8. If YES, please tell us briefly about it here: _____

9. Has your class teacher made suggestions to you this year about what you should read? YES/NO

10. If YES, please tell us some of the suggestions your teacher made: _____

11. Would you say that the number of suggestions for reading your teacher made to you this year has been more than last year (Year 5), or fewer, or about the same? 1 2 3

(please circle one) more suggestions / about the same / fewer suggestions
YES/NO

12. Has your class taken part in any special reading activities this year? _____

13. If YES, please tell us briefly about them here: _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR FILLING IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE



THE KNOWSLEY READING PROJECT: USING TRAINED READING HELPERS EFFECTIVELY

Pupils leaving primary school for secondary school in Knowsley face the increased literacy demands of the secondary curriculum. But are their reading skills up to the challenge? When 500 Knowsley Year 5 pupils were tested in June 1994, their average reading level was found to be 16 months below the national average. Then, during the school year 1994/95, while they were in Year 6, they were given substantial individual help with their reading by **trained adult volunteers**. When the pupils were re-tested in June 1995,

- **The average reading level of the majority of pupils had gone up by 20 months in one year.**
- They had therefore **made up half the gap** towards the national average, and were much better equipped for secondary school than they would have been.
- The fact that the main improvement in reading was demonstrated on a standardised test showed that the progress achieved was **significantly greater than would have been expected if these pupils had experienced 'normal' provision** in Year 6.
- However, a small group of pupils with very low initial scores had made little progress, and would need further specialist help.
- The attitudes to reading of the great majority had improved.
- In particular, the proportion who had recently enjoyed a work of fiction had **more than doubled, to 78 per cent.**
- The Knowsley teachers and adult volunteers involved were united in identifying the improvement in pupils' attitudes and attainment, and in affirming the value of the Project.
- Because the reading helpers were volunteers, the Project was highly cost-effective.

The Knowsley Reading Project will be of interest to all those seeking to broaden the range of effective strategies for improving pupils' reading.

ISBN 0 7005 1412 0
£6.00

National Foundation for Educational Research
for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough
National Literacy Trust
Barclays Bank